

PROPOSAL EVALUATION

Integrated Regional Water Management Implementation Proposition 50, Chapter 8 IRWM Implementation Step 1

PIN: 4676
APPLICANT NAME: San Luis and Delta Mendota Water Authority
PROJECT TITLE: West Side Regional Drainage Plan Proposal

FUNDS REQUESTED: \$25,000,000
COST MATCH: \$10,645,000
TOTAL PROJECT COST: \$35,645,000

DESCRIPTION: The Plan includes water demand reduction, groundwater pumping and management, and water transfers elements to provide for drainage source control and improve water supply reliability for the partners executing the Plan. Statewide benefits of the Plan include allowing for compliance with state water quality objectives for salinity and boron at Vernalis and increases of available water supply at New Melones Reservoir of up to 23,000 AF in dry and critically dry years due to a lessening of need for storage releases for water quality on the San Joaquin River. Note: documents herein refer to West Side or Westside Regional Drainage Plan Proposal.

Question: Consistency with Minimum IRWM Standards - This evaluation will focus on whether the applicant has demonstrated that the IRWM Plan meets the minimum standards.

Pass

Question: Consistency with IRWM Standards - Adopted IRWM Plan and Proof of Formal Adoption. Weighting factor is 1. 5

The 2005 Westside Integrated Water Resources Plan was adopted July 7, 2005, by the applicant's Board of Directors; a signed Resolution was provided.

Question: Consistency with IRWM Standards - Description of Region. Weighting factor is 1. 4

The region is the sum of the areas served by the applicant's Member Agencies along the Westside of the San Joaquin Valley and Central Coast. A map of the region was provided which shows general water infrastructure, but no detailed land use divisions. The scale of the map was hard to read and no details of the map can be seen. There is no obvious regional boundary designated. Throughout the IRWMP, the applicant provides detailed text descriptions of its region, which it breaks down into Divisions. The water quality/quantity conditions are generally presented well and data gaps are discussed. Within each Division, environmental and social/cultural/economic characteristics are described. The applicant was convincing in its explanation for describing an area appropriate for water management.

Question: Consistency with IRWM Standards - Objectives. Weighting factor is 1. 5

The applicant lists the objectives of the IRWMP and states that the projects within the IRWMP began locally and were developed through forums sponsored by the applicant. Examples of regional cooperation are provided. Eleven main objectives are listed that discuss water management strategies which address water reliability, drainage, and quality. Within each objective discussion are project examples from the IRWMP and how each project would help solve regional water-related concerns.

Question: Consistency with IRWM Standards - Water Management Strategies and Integration. Weighting factor is 1. 4

A good overview of each of the IRWMP's projects is provided in the application. The strategies employed and the regional objectives achieved for each project are also presented. The strategies that are listed detail the benefits to water supply, water quality, and other objectives but more concise arguments with a better presentation of integrated strategies should have been presented. Specifically, the argument for the integration of multiple water management strategies does not support or describe any benefits from the combination of the proposed projects. Overall, the IRWMP provides a good presentation of how the applicant's projects would achieve the objectives of the IRWMP.

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Question: Consistency with IRWM Standards - Priorities and Schedule. Weighting factor is 1.

3

A work group evaluated the technical and economic feasibility of the projects in the IRWMP and segregated them into three tiers reflective of each project's planning stage. A policy committee evaluated the tiers and ranked them into short- and long-term priorities based on relative regional benefits. Examples of the short- and long-term projects are presented, and the applicant states that prioritization will continue throughout the implementation process based on goals of regional, State, and federal objectives. An overall ranking and a tentative schedule was not provided, and there is no indication of which projects are the highest priority. There is no presentation of regional priorities, only priorities of the applicant and its member agencies.

Question: Consistency with IRWM Standards - Implementation. Weighting factor is 1.

3

The proposal is a series of projects designed to eliminate agricultural drainage from about 100,000 acres on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley. The applicant indicates that some projects are already underway while others are simply concepts, and discusses those that are technically, financially, and politically ready for implementation. General schedules and cost estimates for some projects are provided and some economic feasibility discussions are included. The general status of each project is included. Some discussion is provided regarding an institutional structure, but no details to identify plan implementation were provided. The applicant provides little information regarding project linkages and interdependencies.

Question: Consistency with IRWM Standards - Impacts and Regional Benefits. Weighting factor is 1.

4

The impacts and benefits of 3 projects are presented. Throughout the IRWMP, regional cooperation is described and direct benefits that relate to water reliability, drainage, and quality are qualified. The applicant indicates that proposed feasibility studies will better identify direct impacts and benefits outside of water-related objectives. However, there is no obvious discussion of a negative impacts evaluation within the region or in adjacent areas. In the IRWMP, economic benefits as a result of better water supply and quality were analyzed. DACs are discussed and the economic benefits provided to DACs through implementation of the Drainage Plan are stated and quantified.

Question: Consistency with IRWM Standards - Technical Analysis and Plan Performance. Weighting factor is 1.

3

The Pleasant Valley Groundwater Banking Project (PIN 7246) and West Side Regional Drainage Plan are the only projects discussed; projects that are underway or in concept phase were not. Summaries of the technical analysis and results used to design the banking project are provided, and general methods for monitoring performance are indicated. The Drainage Plan does not have a good description of the technical aspects of the project, but does describe the general methods that would indicate performance standards. The IRWMP discusses performance monitoring systems and mechanisms to adapt project operations for the two projects ready for implementation, but no region-wide mechanisms or systems are presented.

Question: Consistency with IRWM Standards - Data Management. Weighting factor is 1.

3

Data management methods are discussed, but are very general in nature. The applicant will disseminate banking data through meetings and press releases, and will format information consistent with DWR's DMS. Some information regarding existing monitoring efforts is provided for the banking project. No information regarding data gaps were identified for either project; no references to SWAMP or GAMA were made. There is not a sufficient discussion how data will be managed.

Question: Consistency with IRWM Standards - Financing. Weighting factor is 1.

2

Financing ideas and expectations are presented for the 3 projects. The sponsoring agency applied as a separate applicant for IRWM Grant Program funds for the banking project, and will share costs (10%) with City of Coalinga. The applicant is responsible for the drainage project, and will be paying with federal, State, and local monies (40%, 30%, 30%), but no indication of where those monies would come from was provided. The reservoir project will be the responsibility of the applicant and will be reimbursed with fees from partners and users. Few details are provided in the IRWMP, and little or no information regarding O&M is provided.

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Question: Consistency with IRWM Standards - Relation to Local Planning & Sustainability. Weighting factor is 1.

4

The applicant's member agencies do not, in general, have land use planning authority. Therefore, the applicant indicates that local water agencies and governments have initiated discussions to identify resource management issues related to growth and are beginning to develop formal processes to ensure mutually-acceptable outcomes. The applicant lists the applicable conservation planning goals and policies of each County within its region as guidance for the IRWMP, but there is no distinct connection with the IRWMP. As water planning progresses, more interaction with government agencies will be undertaken. In general, the applicant presents what plans exist, but does not discuss how the IRWMP will ultimately relate to those plans, such as what plans take precedent or whether the IRWMP will present collective goals. The dynamics between the IRWMP and the land use plans are not discussed.

Question: Consistency with IRWM Standards - Stakeholder Involvement & Coordination. Weighting factor is 1.

3

The stakeholders of the IRWMP include all of the applicant's member agencies; however, there are more regional groups affected by the proposed projects that are not identified. No information is provided that describes a process to reach-out to other stakeholders or groups, and potential obstacles for plan implementation could be from these groups, or from conflict from within the applicant (i.e., separate proposal for project cover by this IRWMP - PIN 7246). Significant participation is indicated by various State and federal agencies for various projects. The process of implementation and planning is not fully related to anyone outside of the applicant. Implementation projects are linked with the agencies involved and coordination is assumed by these partnerships. Environmental justice concerns are briefly described, but information regarding DACs is not discussed. Other obstacles are briefly identified.

Question: Funding Match. This evaluation will focus on whether the applicant has demonstrated the ability to meet the minimum funding match or has requested a waiver or reduction in the funding match.

Pass

Question: Description of Proposal. Weighting factor is 3.

9

The brief description of the Drainage Plan consists of 5 tactics and 6 projects to reduce and eliminate high salinity irrigation drainage from the Grasslands Drainage area into the San Joaquin River. The proposal is one of the main projects in the IRWMP, and the goals of the project relate to the IRWMP. The applicant states that the proposal is a regional solution that requires the cooperation of many of its members, and will help with meet TMDLs. The proposal is supported by some scientific studies, but there are no feasibility reports, reconnaissance plans, designs, or other documents that support the project for implementation. Monitoring plans are not discussed. In general, the proposal is good, but little discussion is provided of: environmental review, metrics to be used to show success, and relation to other priority issues within the region/IRWMP.

Question: Project Prioritization. Weighting factor is 2.

8

The Drainage Plan project is one of the short-term priority projects identified within the IRWMP. Within the Drainage Plan, the six projects are prioritized with supporting information. General descriptions of each of the 6 projects are presented, and approximate costs are provided. More detail could have been provided for each of the components. The connection of the Drainage Plan's prioritization to the IRWMP's prioritization is not described in enough detail to understand the relationship of the proposal to the adopted IRWMP. The Pleasant Valley Groundwater Banking Project is one of the key projects contained within the Westside Integrated Water Resources Plan, the IRWMP for the SLDMWA (PIN 4676). However, the Banking project was not proposed by the SLDMWA because Pleasant Valley Water District chose to submit their own Prop. 50 application (PIN 7246).

Question: Cost Estimate. Weighting factor is 1.

5

Overall costs and costs for each of the 6 projects in the Drainage Plan are presented, and the costs are separated per the Guidelines' format. A 29.8% funding match is provided. Administrative costs appear reasonable, and the bulk of the costs are assigned for construction/implementation and land purchase/easement. All of the required information is provided.

Question: Schedule. Weighting factor is 1.

5

The schedule seems reasonable and properly phased, based on the presentation of information in the proposal and the IRWMP. Some work is already initiated while other work will not be completed until 2009-2010. Other projects are presented in the IRWMP, but no discussion is made in this Attachment regarding those projects. Overall, a schedule for each component of the proposal is listed in Attachment 8, local share of the projects are included in the schedules, and monitoring efforts are scheduled.

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Question: Need. Weighting factor is 2.

8

The Drainage Plan is needed to address long standing drainage issues, address TMDL objectives, and to aid in resolving a dispute between the region and USBR. Without a solution to the drainage issue significant areas of agriculture will go out of production resulting in significant economic impacts to the region and water quality would continue to be degraded.

Question: Disadvantaged Communities. Weighting factor is 2.

6

According to the applicant, 3 of the 5 counties that are located within the region are DACs and 12 of the 23 census tracts are DACs. Pertinent information is presented regarding household incomes. The direct benefit to DACs is described as the employment of those that work near the projects. The benefit to DACs is described as indirect to maintain the local agricultural economic base of the region by meeting water quality. By implementing the Drainage Plan, more land area will be able to be farmed that would provide low income farm jobs. The applicant did not assign various benefits to various DAC communities. The connection to a direct benefit to the DACs is not clearly demonstrated.

Question: Program Preferences. Weighting factor is 1.

5

The applicant compares the proposal with 5 of the 6 IRWMP Program Preferences. The preferences are primarily met by improving water supply and producing a solution to quality impairment issues. The applicant provides some information regarding downstream benefits due to salinity reduction in the San Joaquin River. If successful, the proposal would reduce or eliminate saline drainage water, and would help communities outside the region manage salinity concerns. All projects are described to work together to improve water quality and improve water supply reliability, which will reduce pollution, based on TMDL standards, in the San Joaquin River. Groundwater management will use water to blend with water of higher salinity content.

TOTAL SCORE: 89
